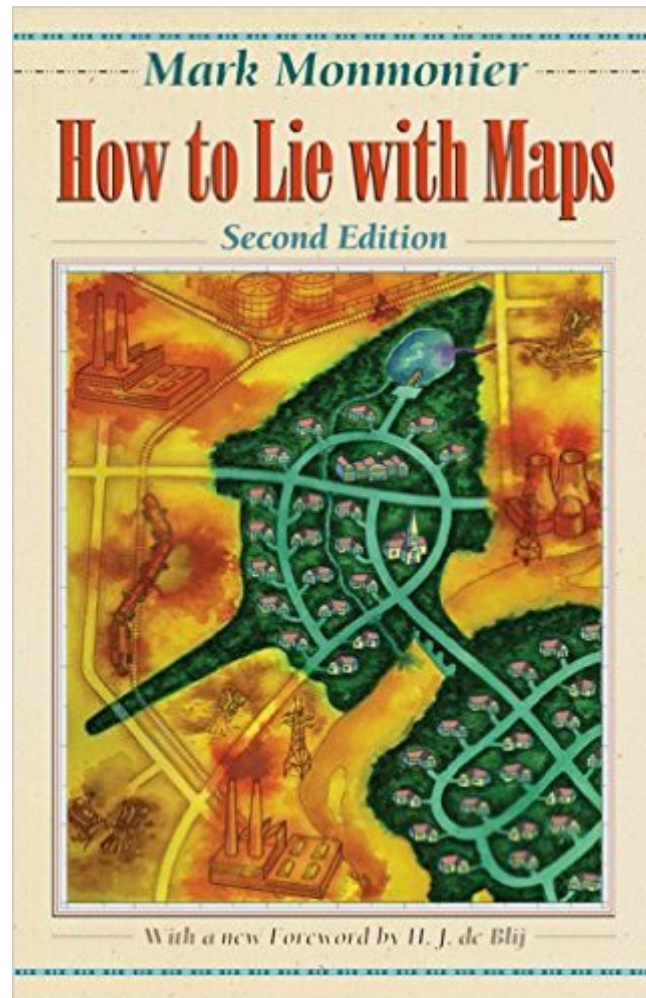


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# How To Lie With Maps



## Synopsis

Originally published to wide acclaim, this lively, cleverly illustrated essay on the use and abuse of maps teaches us how to evaluate maps critically and promotes a healthy skepticism about these easy-to-manipulate models of reality. Monmonier shows that, despite their immense value, maps lie. In fact, they must. The second edition is updated with the addition of two new chapters, 10 color plates, and a new foreword by renowned geographer H. J. de Blij. One new chapter examines the role of national interest and cultural values in national mapping organizations, including the United States Geological Survey, while the other explores the new breed of multimedia, computer-based maps. To show how maps distort, Monmonier introduces basic principles of mapmaking, gives entertaining examples of the misuse of maps in situations from zoning disputes to census reports, and covers all the typical kinds of distortions from deliberate oversimplifications to the misleading use of color. "Professor Monmonier himself knows how to gain our attention; it is not in fact the lies in maps but their truth, if always approximate and incomplete, that he wants us to admire and use, even to draw for ourselves on the facile screen. His is an artful and funny book, which like any good map, packs plenty in little space." "Scientific American" A useful guide to a subject most people probably take too much for granted. It shows how map makers translate abstract data into eye-catching cartograms, as they are called. It combats cartographic illiteracy. It fights cartophobia. It may even teach you to find your way. For that alone, it seems worthwhile. "Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, The New York Times". . . witty examination of how and why maps lie. [The book] conveys an important message about how statistics of any kind can be manipulated. But it also communicates much of the challenge, aesthetic appeal, and sheer fun of maps. Even those who hated geography in grammar school might well find a new enthusiasm for the subject after reading Monmonier's lively and surprising book. "Wilson Library Bulletin" A reading of this book will leave you much better defended against cheap atlases, shoddy journalism, unscrupulous advertisers, predatory special-interest groups, and others who may use or abuse maps at your expense. "John Van Pelt, Christian Science Monitor" Monmonier meets his goal admirably. . . . [His] book should be put on every map user's 'must read' list. It is informative and readable . . . a big step forward in helping us to understand how maps can mislead their readers. "Jeffrey S. Murray, Canadian Geographic

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although this book teaches how to manipulate maps in order to mislead an audience, it is more valuable as a reference to avoid having others do the same to you. Also of interest is the fact that mistakes are often responsible for the lie. This is a good buy for those who are involved with the creation of GIS maps (and those who view them!).

Any book that calls itself, "How to Lie with..." is simply begging for a reviewer to compare it to, "How to Lie with Statistics." The latter is a classic that is fun and educational. Unfortunately, this book falls short of deserving the title but it is still an interesting read. One of the main problems is that rather than being a guide to help avoid being fooled by maps, the author uses the book as an introduction to the science of cartography. It seems that a large portion of the book is aimed towards the prospective mapmaker. I found these parts to be a bit difficult to get through. Also, there are very few real life examples in the book. I would have liked to see more examples from newspapers or magazines in place of the samples the author provides. Some of the few real life examples are from Nazi Germany and the USSR and seem very dated. That was the bad side but there are many good points to the book. The chapter on development maps was very interesting (although the attempts at humor are wasted) and should be required reading for anyone who is serving on a zoning board. Also, the discussion of choropleth maps is excellent and the reader will come away with a clear

understanding of how these maps can be abused either deliberately or accidentally by the cartographer. The author shows examples of very different choropleth maps using the same data that will make you skeptical of anyone who uses choropleth maps to prove a point. Although parts of the book drag, the book is short at 150 pages so it is a relatively quick read. I wouldn't say that it is required reading, but it will help you maintain a healthy skepticism about maps that you might encounter.

Maps are one of the commonest kind of information graphic. They occur in many forms, in many contexts, and commonly carry more data per square inch than just about any other kind of diagram. Also, a map carries some sense of authority and may even inspire a kind of loyalty - surely you know at least one map fanatic? That carrying capacity and authority can be used badly as easily as used well: incompetently, to make some point at the expense of others, or intentionally to misdirect. The book's first section reminds us that every map contains mis- or missing information - if only because the world is round and the map is flat. Later, Monmonier gives examples of incompetence showing how information, especially in color, can be illegible. He also shows how maps can affect political decisions as close as your own back yard, the maps used to make land planning and zoning decisions. He works up from town hall politics to the international scale, including some remarkable Cold War artifacts. He mentions esthetics only briefly, mostly to point out how the decision to make a map look nice can corrupt its data content. This is a loss since esthetics don't inherently conflict with the message, but good illustrators already know how to create visual appeal and bad ones should not be encouraged. This is a useful addition for anyone who creates or uses information in picture form. It's not as broad as other books, but adds depth to discussions about one particular kind of information graphic. The wide ranging and well categorized bibliography is just an extra. [//wiredweird](#)

I am not a professional cartographer by any means. I'm a designer/illustrator. Recently, I've received several assignments working on way finding maps for city tourism departments, university campuses, and zoos. Those sorts of maps are more about helping people orient themselves and find their way around a place on foot. So I picked up this book to do a little more research on the subject since the sorts of maps I create definitely do a lot of "lying" to get people around. It's a good book, but broader than the scope of my work. The parts of the book that did pertain to my project didn't really shed any new light on the subject matter. It was mostly just common sense. I actually found a lot of the subject matter to be obvious, especially about use of shapes, lines, and colors. Of

course, I'm trained as a graphic artist, so that could be why it was basic to me. Still, many of the chapters I read through simply because I don't like to skip around and perhaps miss something that's referred to in later chapters. So, the information isn't bad, it just wasn't quite as deep as I hoped. The book might be a great primer for a person getting into a cartography career. It's probably even better for a decision maker in a position of authority (like a town planning committee) who is has a hard time thinking of things in spatial terms and is more analytical, literal (like accountants?). It would help them understand the decisions and ideas being presented to them by designers/cartographers/illustrators. So overall it's a well written book, but for those who are familiar with map making and/or those trained in use of color theory and graphic communication it's a little basic. Perhaps it's greatest strength would be for a map maker to support the decisions he makes with some published research. Especially when his own explanation won't do while presenting an idea to a client for approval.

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